Preschool–Grade 6

Jesus Walks on Water

Sunday School Lesson for Preteens (Ages 11–12), 45–60 minutes

Main point: Keep your eyes on Jesus. Fear grows when we look at the wind; faith grows when we look to Him, and He is always able to save.
Bible passage: Matthew 14:22–33. Students read it out loud themselves.
Memory verse: "But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid." *Matthew 14:27 (KJV)* and "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." *Hebrews 12:2 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each student, paper or a notebook and a pen for each student, a whiteboard and a marker, and one take-home sheet for each student.
Before class: read Matthew 14:13–33, Mark 6:45–52 and Job 9:8. Write both memory verses on the board. Decide who reads which verses, or go around the room a few verses each.

1. Opening game: Wind List (5–10 minutes)

Draw a big ship on the board with wavy lines around it. Students call out "winds": things that make people their age afraid or worried (tests, moving, sickness in the family, friends turning on you, the news, the future). Write each one as a wave around the ship. Then ask them to rank the top three. Ask: *What happens to your mind when you stare at these all day?* Say: "Peter found out what happens when you look at the wind. Let's read it."

2. Bible story: Students Read It (15 minutes)

Tell the start in your own words: Jesus had just fed about five thousand men, besides women and children (Matthew 14:21). Right away He made the disciples get into a ship and go ahead of Him, while He sent the crowds away. Then He went up into a mountain alone to pray (14:22–23).

Read out loud: Matthew 14:22–33. Students take turns, a few verses each. Old words in this passage:

- **straightway** (14:22, 14:27): right away; **constrained** (14:22): made them, urged them strongly
- **apart** (14:23): by Himself; **in the midst of** (14:24): in the middle of
- **contrary** (14:24): blowing against them
- **the fourth watch of the night** (14:25): the last of the four watches the night was divided into, before morning
- **troubled** (14:26): shaken and upset; **a spirit** (14:26): they did not know it was Jesus
- **be of good cheer** (14:27): take courage; **bid me** (14:28): tell me to
- **boisterous** (14:30): wild and violent; **wherefore** (14:31): why; **ceased** (14:32): stopped

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Then read two more verses out loud:

- **Mark 6:48:** Jesus "saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them." He saw them struggling.
- **Job 9:8:** God "alone spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea." Only God walks on the waves. The men in the ship saw Jesus do it and worshipped Him (Matthew 14:33). Jesus is God manifest in the flesh (1 Timothy 3:16).

3. Questions to ask (15 minutes)

1. Jesus sent the disciples into a storm and then went to pray (14:22–24). Mark says He saw them toiling (Mark 6:48). How does it change a hard time to know Jesus sees you in it?
2. Peter said, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come" (14:28). He waited for Jesus' word before he stepped out. Why does that matter?
3. The wind had been against them since verse 24, yet Peter walked. In verse 30 he "saw the wind boisterous" and was afraid. What changed for Peter? What are you looking at most this week?
4. Peter's prayer was three words, "Lord, save me" (14:30). What does that teach you about prayer when you are sinking?
5. Jesus caught Peter immediately, and then asked, "Wherefore didst thou doubt?" (14:31). Is that question harsh or kind? Why?
6. The story ends with worship: "Of a truth thou art the Son of God" (14:33). How does seeing who Jesus is change how afraid you are?

4. Memory verse (5 minutes)

Old words in Hebrews 12:2: **looking unto Jesus** means keeping our eyes on Him. **Author and finisher of our faith** means Jesus starts our faith and carries it all the way to the end. **Despising the shame** means He did not let the shame of the cross stop Him. **Set down at the right hand of the throne of God** means He reigns with all power.
Read both verses together. Then students cover one phrase at a time and quiz a partner. Say Matthew 14:27 this week; keep working on Hebrews 12:2 next week too.

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5. What this means for us (5–10 minutes)

Say: "Peter cried, 'Lord, save me,' and Jesus stretched out His hand. God loves you, and 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, God who came as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:3–4, KJV). We obey the gospel the way Peter preached it: 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) We **repent**, turning from sin, and our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are buried with Jesus by baptism in His name, all the way under the water. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we rise to walk in newness of life, a brand-new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the Holy Ghost, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance, which means as He gives the words (Acts 2:4). Jesus called this being born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5)."
Pray with the students, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.

6. Activity: Journal (10 minutes)

Each student writes privately. No one has to share. Write these three prompts on the board:

1. What "wind" am I looking at most right now?
2. What would it look like to keep my eyes on Jesus there this week?
3. Write a short prayer, as honest as Peter's "Lord, save me."
   If there is time, invite a few volunteers to share one sentence.

This week: every time you notice yourself worrying, stop and say Matthew 14:27 to yourself, then pray about that worry by name.

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You that You see us when the wind is against us. Help us keep our eyes on Jesus and not on the storm. When we start to sink, help us call on You, and thank You that You always hear. Thank You for loving us and making a way to save us through Jesus. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a student asks why Peter sank: stay with the text. Peter walked while he went to Jesus; "when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid," and he began to sink (Matthew 14:30). Jesus called it doubt and little faith (14:31), and in the same moment He caught him. Jesus does not drop us when our faith is small.

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